

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: INDOCHINA REFUGEE CENTER PROPOSED FOR MACAU AND
OVERCROWDING IN HONG KONG.

REFERENCE A. HONG KONG 14702 (NOTAL) B. STATE 285189
(NOTAL) C. SINGAPORE 5242 (NOTAL) D.SINGAPORE 5283 (NOTAL)

1. BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES OUTLINED IN REFTEL A WITH
REGARD TO TOURIST HOTEL SPACE, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT
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BEST WAY TO MEET SHORT-TERM PROBLEM OF OVERCROWDING IN
HONG KONG IS FOR ICEM AND UNHCR TO LOCATE CHINESE-STYLE
HOTEL QUARTERS. THIS FAR PREFERABLE TO BEING FORCED INTO
RE-OPENING OF OFFICIAL HONG KONG GOVERNMENT TRANSIT CAMP
SHOULD REFUGEE ARRIVALS GROW. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO
CONTRACT FOR SUCH QUARTERS AND, IF NECESSARY, MAKE
MINIMUM BASIC IMPROVEMENTS WHILE REMAINING WITHIN REASONABLE

COST BOUNDS.

2. WITH REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY OF A TRANSIT CENTER IN MACAU, CONGEN AUTHORIZED TO RAISE THE ISSUE IN LOW-KEY FASHION WITH MACAU GOVERNOR, IF HE DOES NOT RAISE THE ISSUE. YOU SHOULD STRESS THAT WHILE WE SUPPORT SUCH A CAMP IN PRINCIPLE, THE UNHCR WILL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SUCH A TRANSIT CENTER WITH MACAU

AUTHORITIES. AS YOU INTEND, THE GOVERNOR SHOULD BE REFERRED TO THE REGIONAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE.

3. DEPARTMENT WISHES TO STRESS THAT MACAU TRANSIT CENTER SHOULD HAVE SECONDARY PRIORITY TO SINGAPORE TRANSIT CENTER, WHERE OFFER COULD SOON GO STALE FOR LACK OF PROGRESS. ADDITIONALLY, SINGAPORE CENTER WOULD, IN SHARP DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS POLICY, PROVIDE ONLY DROP-OFF POINT FOR MERCHANT VESSELS HEADING WEST FROM SOUTH CHINA SEA. WE BELIEVE THIS WILL HAVE IMPORTANT AND IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON TREATMENT ACCORDED REFUGEE BOATS AT SEA IN THE AREA. WHILE MACAU CENTER COULD ASSIST OVERCROWDING PROBLEM IN HONG KONG, WE DO NOT SEE MACAU AS REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTER TO WHICH REFUGEES WOULD BE TRANSFERRED OTHER THAN FROM HONG KONG. MACAU COULD HARDLY STAND STILL FOR SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WITHOUT ASSURANCES OF ONWARD RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES AND, WITH SUCH ASSURANCES, OTHERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHOULD BE PREPARED TO MEET THEIR MINIMUM OBLIGATIONS IN THIS REGARD.

4. ALSO FOR TOKYO: DEPARTMENT DOES NOT BELIEVE ANY TRANSFER OF REFUGEES FROM JAPAN TO MACAU SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED AS SUGGESTED IN REFTEL A. THIS WOULD FURTHER SOUR CONGRESSIONAL MOOD WHERE JAPAN HAS ALREADY COME IN FOR HEAVY CRITICISM FOR ITS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT INDOCHINESE PERMANENTLY, AND FOR ITS RELATIVELY MODEST FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNHCR PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. PERMITTING THE JAPANESE TO DUMP OFF THEIR REFUGEES IN MACAU WOULD ALSO SET BAD INTERNATIONAL PRECEDENT. EVEN THOUGH A TRANSIT CENTER IN MACAU WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM JAPAN, DEPARTMENT WOULD EXPECT GENEROUS JAPANESE RESPONSE TO UNHCR FUNDING REQUEST FOR A TRANSIT CENTER IN MACAU. INDEED, THE DEPARTMENT AND CONGRESS ARE COUNTING ON JAPANESE FISCAL GENEROSITY IN CONTINUED EFFORTS TO COPE WITH THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. VANCE

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